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THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY

VOLUME XXVI

SEPTEMBER 1920

NUMBER 2

REFLECTIONS UPON THE SOCIOLOGY OF HERBERT SPENCER¹

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I imagine that nearly all of us who took up sociology between 1870, say, and 1890 did so at the instigation of Spencer. While he did not invent the word (though most of us had never heard it before), much less the idea, he gave new life to both, and seemed to show us an open road into those countries which as yet we had only vaguely yearned to explore. His book, *The Study of Sociology*, perhaps the most readable of all his works, had a large sale and probably did more to arouse interest in the subject than any other publication before or since. Whatever we may have occasion to charge against him, let us set down at once a large credit for effective propagation.

It is certain that nearly all of us fell away from him sooner or later and more or less completely. My own defection, I believe, was one of the earliest and most complete; and since the recoil has gone farther with me than with most others, it is not unlikely that I now fail to do him justice. However, my views, such as

¹ A paper read before the Research Club of the University of Michigan at a meeting held to commemorate the centenary of Spencer's birth. On the same occasion Alfred H. Lloyd read a paper on Spencer's philosophy, which appears in the *Scientific Monthly* for June, 1920.

they are, have at least had ample time to mature, and I offer them for what they may be worth.

The ancestors of Herbert Spencer were plain people of the English middle class, most of them dissenters from the Established Church and somewhat radical in politics. His father, however, was a man of marked ability, a teacher noted for ingenious ways of evoking interest, and the author of a work on *Inventional Geometry*, in which this subject was taught by a method of experiment and discovery. An uncle, Thomas Spencer, took a degree at Cambridge and became somewhat distinguished in the church, rather as an agitator of reforms, however, than in orthodox activities. He was frequently at odds with his colleagues and finally went so far as to advocate the separation of church and state. The innovating spirit observed in his father and uncle was justly regarded by Spencer as a precious part of his own heredity. His mother was amiable and devoted but apparently of no marked individuality, rather harshly treated by her husband, and sometimes referred to by her son as an example of the ill effects of too much self-abnegation.

Herbert received very little systematic instruction. This seems to have been due partly to his father's views, exalting self-activity and disinclined to force natural inclinations, and partly to the boy's delicate health. His mind was active, but chiefly upon inquiries of his own—into mechanics, natural history, or ethics—and even then he showed signs of that incapacity for sustained reading which was pathological in his mature years. He began Latin and Greek, but apparently did not get enough to be of any use, and never studied English grammar at all. Indeed, apart from a limited ability to read French, acquired later, Spencer seems never to have had the use of any foreign or ancient language. Nor does it appear that he ever studied history, literature, or philosophy, except as he was incited to occasional reading in these subjects by the requirements of his own work.

At the age of fourteen his uncle, with whom he was then living, describes him as having superior talents but lacking diligence and modesty,¹ this last judgment referring to the irrepressible con-

¹ *Autobiography*, I, 119.

tentiousness for which he was at all ages remarkable. We may think of him, then, as a bright, argumentative boy, rather disagreeably self-confident, well supplied with ideas, many of them original, regarding mathematics, natural science, and the conduct of life, but notably deficient in the foundations of traditional culture.

At seventeen Spencer got a job as a civil engineer and was engaged in this work four years, showing an aptitude for it which might apparently have led to distinguished success, had he not preferred to give it up and try for something more befitting the large faculties of which he was conscious.

The period from twenty-one to twenty-eight was spent in desultory study and brief experiments at making a living. He tried writing, editing, and inventing, with indifferent pecuniary success, and was employed more profitably upon a parliamentary investigation of certain railways. At one time he took an active part, on the radical side, in a political campaign. At twenty-eight he got work as sub-editor of the *London Economist*. The duties were light, leaving him ample time for other pursuits, and he was thus enabled to develop his ideas, increase his acquaintance, practice writing, and pass gradually into that career of philosophic thought and publication which occupied the remainder of his life.

The character of Spencer's sociology is so interwoven with his personal traits that I find that my best approach to it will be through an inquiry as to how far his nature and training fitted him to deal with this subject. That he possessed very great powers is too obvious to dwell upon; I shall therefore occupy myself chiefly with indicating certain limitations.

I think, then, that Spencer was not by nature especially suited to be an observer of mankind and of society. It seems clear, from his own account of himself in his *Autobiography* as well as from other witnesses, that he was rather deficient in those sympathetic qualities which are, after all, the only direct source of our knowledge of other people. A lack of tact, which he deplored but did not overcome, was accentuated by a somewhat censorious and unconciliatory way of expressing himself, both of which traits

he ascribes to heredity. "The Spencers of the preceding generation," he says, "were all characterized by lack of reticence."¹ On the other side, "my mother was distinguished by extreme simple-mindedness; so much so that, unlike women in general, she was without the thought of policy in her dealings with other persons. In me these traits were united."¹ "The tendency to fault-finding," he adds, "is dominant—disagreeably dominant."² He thought this was probably "a chief factor in the continuance of my celibate life. Readiness to see inferiorities rather than superiorities must have impeded the finding of one who attracted me in adequate degree."³ It would be ungenerous and indeed injudicial to convict one of a defect of this delicate nature solely from his own confession; the confession is ingratiating and in some measure contradicts itself. It accords, however, with the impression one gets not only from the *Autobiography* but from the authorized life by Duncan and from contemporary anecdotes, which is that of a nature high-minded indeed and in its way fine-minded, but unsympathetic and of a schoolmasterish sort of egotism, prone to read other people lectures rather than to hear what they have to say. This native lack of touch was increased by his preoccupation with speculative ideas. "I am a bad observer of humanity in the concrete," he says, "being too much given to wandering off into the abstract."⁴ He was, in short, quite the opposite in these regards of his compatriot Lord Roberts, of whom it is said:

He had . . . an immense power of sympathetic absorption in the affairs of others. He spoke to you not only with his whole attention for the time being, he went further than that: he gave you the impression that this was the supreme moment of the day for which he had been waiting. He entered so fully, so sympathetically, into my interests, that I was tempted to expand and to confide in him even private affairs, in no way connected with the matter . . . that I had come about.⁵

Spencer's disregard of personality is curiously illustrated by his essay on "The Philosophy of Style." In this he does not appear to be interested in the fact—if indeed he perceives it at all—that

¹ *Autobiography*, II, 329.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

² *Ibid.*, p. 512.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

⁵ Mortimer Menpes, *Lord Roberts*, p. 7.

at least half of style is the communication of personal attitudes, and this by means so subtle as to defy the rather mechanical analysis which he employs. The whole study, therefore, lacks penetration and, I should suppose, would be a most unsafe guide to practice.

This lack of insight into other minds, whether in face-to-face intercourse or through works of literature and art, was nothing less than a lack of the perceptions indispensable to any direct study of social phenomena. It was a fatal handicap.

Of the same piece with his defect of sympathy is Spencer's lack of literary and historical culture, which, for an intellectual man and a writer, was remarkable. Not only did he have no discipline of this sort, to speak of, in his youth, but in his later years his nervous trouble appears to have prohibited any sustained reading not indispensable to his work. His power of attention, limited to some two hours a day, was infringed not only by serious application but by a novel or a newspaper or even by hearing others read. For these reasons, quite sufficient and by no means discreditable to him, he had, apparently, only a perfunctory knowledge of English literature and practically none of any other. In middle life he organized for his works on sociology much historical material compiled by assistants, but by that time the bent of his mind was fixed; and, moreover, he approached this material with a set purpose and not in the disinterested attitude propitious to culture. Canon Barnett, with whom he made the Nile trip in 1879, wrote in a letter, "He is strangely ignorant of history and literature; so I should be shy of taking any of his facts," adding, "He is not interesting. There are few matters which he knows enough of, or is interested enough in, to discuss."¹ Whatever his knowledge, Spencer certainly had little or nothing of the historical sentiment, no brooding sympathy with the movements of the human spirit in the past. Anything of this sort was quite alien to his formal and positive mode of thought.

He not only lacked culture, in the usual meaning, but he set a low value on it, he almost scorned it. "Had Greece and Rome never existed," he remarks, "human life and the right conduct of

¹ *Canon Barnett*, by his wife, I, 230-31.

it would have been in their essentials exactly what they now are: survival or death, health or disease, prosperity or adversity, happiness or misery, would have been just in the same ways determined by the adjustment or non-adjustment of actions to requirements."¹

Is this true? I think not; Greece and Rome are of our life-blood. It seems to me, indeed, that such expressions reveal a defect which is more detrimental to truth than ignorance, namely, contempt for essential knowledge. A man may lack a certain kind of culture, as Keats lacked Greek, and yet have a sympathy and reverence which brings him close to it; but Spencer was not a man of this sort. His was not that lowly mind which enters easily all the doors of knowledge. Humility is hardly to be found in him, and his attitude toward such matters as history, literature, philosophy, and the fine arts is that of one who does not need to pore over the records of the past, but is already competent, by virtue of natural gifts and a philosophy of his own device, to instruct the world on these questions. He displays, in short, a cocksureness that does nothing to reconcile us to his insufficiency.

It is no crime in a man not to care for the loveliness of St. Mark's church at Venice—we all have our blind spots. But what shall we say of one who, with no title to competence, assumes to set aside the judgment of time and to pronounce, after a page of rather fatuous comment, that it is "not precious aesthetically considered"?² Are not such judgments bold with the boldness of the man who declares that the earth is flat, because it looks so to him? And this is typical of Spencer's attitude not only toward art but toward many other things of which he knew equally little. It argues, I think, a certain incomprehension of the nature of phenomena of this sort, and of the conditions necessary to their appreciation. Works of literature and the various arts have their being in a traditional organism of thought and expression, and there is no hope of participating fully in their spirit except as one earns a membership in that organism. This is done by sympathy, by open-mindedness, and by reverent study of works which promise to repay such study.

¹ *Autobiography*, II, 43.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 407-8.

I do not mean that Spencer had a mind wholly insensible to the fine arts. He enjoyed and even practiced music, for example, had considerable skill in drawing, and liked to read aloud the poetry of Shelley. I mean that he seems to have no feeling for the traditional, social, and personal elements that enter so largely into art and literature and therefore no sense of the need of culture and sympathy in passing judgment upon them.

If our philosopher's defects of nature and education were such as I have indicated, it will not be surprising if we find that he lacked direct and authentic perception of the structure and movement of human life, and that he conceived these phenomena almost wholly by analogy. The organic wholes of the social order are mental facts of much the same nature as personality, and much the same kind of sympathetic imagination is needed to grasp them. This Spencer did not have, and accordingly his conceptions, however bold and ingenious, are, in my opinion, not properly sociological at all.

If there is in Spencer one dominant trait, engendering both his qualities and his defects, it is without doubt the energy of his speculative impulse. This was not only immensely strong and bold but was combined in a signal degree with the need to think exhaustively and in concrete terms. It thus impelled him not only to conceive a vast scheme of cosmic principles but to develop these with apparent consistency in every department of nature, fortifying each detail by clear statement and a convincing array of facts. This chiefly gave him his great vogue with inquiring young men; he gratified two needs of every sound mind: to think largely and to think in definitely conceivable forms. Never vague or merely abstract, he saw in detail what he saw at all. No doubt, also, his great pretensions and his rejection of traditional knowledge contributed to his acceptance by confirming the inquiring young man in his own self-conceit.

So far as I am able to judge, Spencer had great gifts as an observer of inanimate nature, and only his exorbitant speculative trend prevented his achieving more important results than he did. His questioning of accepted ideas, his persistency, his ingenuity and manual skill (much greater than that of Darwin) were all

valuable traits. What he mainly lacked as a natural scientist, I imagine, was again humility. He was inclined to domineer over his facts, instead of listening with open mind to what they had to say.

Spencer claimed that he had "equal proclivities towards analysis and synthesis." This is true, in the sense that he had an equal need to see his conceptions in large and in detail, but I think that both his analysis and his synthesis were *a priori*, that in both the disposition to work out preconceived ideas is far more active than disinterested curiosity. Indeed, when he once gets to work, especially upon social material, the latter is hardly discernible. He himself regrets that he was apt "to be enslaved by a plan once formed"¹ and to slur over difficulties.²

Here, of course, is his most obvious inferiority to Darwin. While he may have surveyed almost as many facts, he did so in a wholly different spirit. Darwin's great gift, I suppose, was the combination of a humble and tireless curiosity with a generalizing power vast, indeed, but by no means domineering. He collected facts and drew a theory from them, while Spencer spun a theory from any material he happened to have and collected facts to illustrate it. Hence, in spite of his ingenuity, he was far less original, less solid, less truly the man of science than his contemporary. The inquiring young man will not long remain content with Spencer if he has any gift for direct observation. He will presently discover that the light which seems so clear is not daylight but the artificial illumination of a theory; that the array of facts are but illustrations of the theory; and that the assertions do not stand the test of real life.

The conception of organic process which Spencer gave most of his life to elaborating remains meager. It grows longer and longer but never fills out with real flesh and blood. Where will you find in him any of those illuminating flashes that show a conception vividly and as a whole? It is all detail and formula, never a revelation.

Nothing could have been more odious to him than the suggestion that his work belonged, psychologically, in a class with that

¹ *Autobiography*, II, 215.

² *Ibid.*, I, 452.

of the systematizers of theology—Thomas Aquinas, perhaps, or John Calvin—rather than with the true men of science. But would there not be some truth in such a suggestion?

Turning now from Spencer's talent to his works, there is perhaps nothing more fundamental for our purpose than his social psychology. This is found in those four chapters of his *Principles of Psychology* which treat of "Sociality and Sympathy," "Egoistic Sentiments," "Ego-altruistic Sentiments," and "Altruistic Sentiments." The *Principles of Psychology* was first published when Spencer was thirty-five, costing him such labor that he ascribes to it in great part the impaired health from which he suffered thereafter. It did not at that time, however, include any social psychology, but was concerned wholly with the development of the individual mind. Apparently he did not perceive the need of a social psychology at all until he began some years later to work out his sociology. Then, having, as he says, "to follow out Evolution under those higher forms which societies present," he was led to discuss "the special psychology of Man considered as the unit of which societies are composed."¹ The idea of treating the subject was, then, an afterthought conceived rather late in life and carried out in a supplementary part of his *Psychology* called "Corollaries," published in the second edition of that work, which appeared when the author was fifty-two years old. It is not strange that his discussion is somewhat perfunctory and involves no change from his previous modes of thought.

Speaking summarily, I may say that he explains the social sentiments by their utility, by conscious and unconscious adaptation to the conditions of life, and by the cumulative inheritance of acquired mental traits. Natural selection is included but not much emphasized; it is hardly essential to the argument. We are shown that the individual is sympathetic because sympathy has been useful and habitual to the race in the past. Transmitted by heredity and increased by use it is enabled, with the aid of the representative powers of the mind, to unite with instinct in forming social sentiments. These may be ego-altruistic (so called because

¹ *Principles of Psychology*, II, 508.

they involve both a sense of one's self and a reference to the state of mind of others, like the love of approbation); or they may be wholly altruistic, like a generosity which seeks no recognition, or like a disinterested sense of justice. All sentiments, however, are primarily egoistic, according to Spencer, and become altruistic when referred to others. "The altruistic feelings," he says, "are all sympathetic excitements of egoistic feelings."

Let me first point out that this phraseology of egoism and altruism marks an individualistic conception; that is, it makes the whole matter one of the interplay of separate units rather than of collective growth. A sentiment grows up in one person and may be referred to another by sympathy: there is no idea of *a continuing social life, having an organization and history of its own, in which sentiments are gradually developed, and from which they are derived by the individual*. It cannot be said that Spencer's treatment excludes such an idea, but his failure to develop it, here or elsewhere, shows that it had no considerable part in his thought. And yet it is the central conception of any real sociology, since any science of life must have a distinct life-process with which it is concerned.

A sociological view, I think, would be that the higher sentiments are in general neither egoistic nor altruistic as regards their source, but just social, derived, that is, from the stream of an organic common life. It is, for example, an incorrect view of the sense of justice to say that we first develop it regarding ourselves and then transfer it by sympathy to others. Our sentiments of justice have been worked out by society in the past and come to us primarily from the social environment and tradition, their reference to myself or to you being secondary. We acquire them just as we do the meaning of the word "justice," that is, we find the idea or sentiment already organized for us in the current of history, and assimilate it by the aid of conversation and literature, although it must get flesh and blood, as it were, from our own experience. The social tradition supplies the pattern which the individual fills out and colors in a more or less original manner. The proof is the established fact that the customs or mores of the group can make almost anything appear to the individual as just or unjust.

Spencer's view is scarcely different from that of one who should maintain that the idea of justice is created anew in each generation by heredity and sympathy, failing to see that it also represents the accumulated wisdom of the past transmitted through language. His process is not social but biological and individual.

The essential differences between present social psychology, as I understand it, and the conception of Spencer may be otherwise stated as follows: We now believe that the individual is born with decisive but quite rudimentary capacities and tendencies, owing little or nothing to direct inheritance of the effects of use. For the development of these into a human personality he is wholly dependent upon a social environment which comes down from the past through an organic social process. This social process cannot be inferred from individual psychology, much less from heredity; it must be studied directly and is the principal subject of sociology.¹ It absorbs individuals into its life, conforming them to its requirements and at the same time developing their individuality. There is no general opposition between the individual and the social whole; they are complementary and work together to carry on the historical organism. Neither is there any general opposition between social environment and heredity; they also are complementary, working together to carry on a human whole which is social in one aspect and biological in another. Spencer, on the other hand, has little perception of a *social* organism continuous with the past. His organism, so far as he has one, is biological in its process, transmitted to the individual by the direct inheritance of mental states created by use. No doubt, as he sees the matter, the individuals thus generated unite into a differentiated and co-ordinated society, but this is conceived almost as if it were continually reproduced from biological roots, like the annual foliage of a perennial herb. Its historical continuity, momentum, and abundance of content, its power to mold individuals as well as to be molded by them, is not clearly seen. And this is true of all Spencer's sociology. It is

¹ Much that has recently been published regarding the social working of instinct shows little improvement upon Spencer in this regard. I mean that it proceeds from an analysis of instinct directly to social conclusions (sometimes of the most sweeping character), without the least direct study of the social process. Even the instinct studied is usually subhuman, that of man being inferred from analogy.

biological-individualistic, the biology being of a type involving use-inheritance, and the individualism of a mechanical sort quite inadequate to embrace human personality.

It is a common impression that Spencer emphasized the social order at the expense of the individual person. I would rather say that he had little conception either of a social order, properly speaking, or of persons as members of that order, and consequently never seriously confronted the problem of their relation. Such questions, for example, as that of the precise nature and value of leadership are not worked out by him, because they belong in that region of true, as distinguished from analogical, sociology which he scarcely entered.¹

At least one critic, Mr. J. M. Robertson, in his *Modern Humanists*, has pointed out that Spencer's thought about society shows two distinct currents, separate in their origin and appearing to other minds irreconcilable. One apparently came from the intellectual atmosphere surrounding his youth and early manhood, before he became in any sense an evolutionist. It is essentially static, individualistic, hedonistic; and is otherwise remarkable for the doctrinaire thoroughness with which he worked it out and applied it to questions of the day, often, it would seem, in defiance of sound practical judgment. The other current is evolutionary, beginning apparently when he was about twenty in the reading of Lyell's *Geology* (where he found an account of the views of Lamarck), gradually gaining upon him as he grew older, greatly increased and modified by the publication of the *Origin of Species*, when he was about forty, but never so possessing his mind as to solve his thought into one consistent whole. He remained to the end partly of the old time and partly of the new, asserting both tendencies with equal conviction, unaware of any incompatibility, and never becoming an evolutionist in the sense that most men are who have grown up in Darwinism.

Among the works in which the first influence is ascendent are *Social Statics*—his first book, published when he was thirty—the *Principles of Ethics* and *Man versus the State*, the two latter

¹ Compare the remarks on the relation of the individual to society in the *Autobiography*, II, 543.

appearing late in his life. In these his leading conceptions are pre-Darwinian, in the sense that they have proved incapable of survival after Darwinism has had time to develop its social implications. The point of view is individualistic and the practical policy one of extreme laissez faire, as opposed to social control. The process is conceived not as continuously evolutionary but as tending toward an ideal condition of moving equilibrium, in which the relations of men to one another will be morally adjusted and we shall all be as happy as we can reasonably desire. To this conception he adhered at all times when he was dealing with questions of personal conduct or social policy.

I do not know that it would be worth while to argue at length that these ideas are unevolutionary. The most convincing argument is that they have not in fact been able to endure as a part of evolutionary thought. It is more and more recognized, I think, that while the organic view of life implied in Darwinism is consistent with very great emphasis upon individuality, it also involves an increasing consciousness and self-direction in the process as a whole, irreconcilable with the drastic reduction of state functions advocated by Spencer. And I am not aware that the idea of a coming equilibrium of human relations, in the anticipation of which we can find a code of conduct, has any important following at the present time. It is felt to be untenable.

His ideas on general evolution find their first expression in an essay called *Progress: Its Law and Cause*, published in 1857, and are finally elaborated in *First Principles*, which appeared in 1862, when he was forty-two years old. The second part of *First Principles*, on the Knowable, contains matter which philosophic students of sociology may still find worth while, and it is perhaps the only part of Spencer which I can recommend to such with any confidence. His method is to take elementary processes, such as differentiation and co-ordination of parts and functions, and set them forth with a great array of facts from the inorganic, the vegetable, and the animal worlds, and finally from the social. This had a great effect upon me in the eighteen-eighties by showing the life of man upon earth as one of progressive organization and so giving me an animating and assuring perspective. Although

I now think that the view thus revealed is superficial, nevertheless it was worth seeing then and I see no reason why it should not be so now.

Regarded more closely, *First Principles* shows those defects of which I have spoken. Human life is perceived not directly but through mechanical analogies. The higher and more distinctively human part of it is hardly perceived at all; there is, for example, no discussion of the growth of rational social guidance as a part of progress. The thought is mechanized to a degree almost incredible to one who enters its stifling atmosphere from the world out of doors.

I almost hesitate to quote Spencer's famous formula of evolution lest I may appear to be ridiculing him. It has a quaint sound now, but as he himself regarded it as quintessential we are hardly at liberty to pass it by. It runs, then, as follows:

Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the contained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.¹

Now the problem of evolution is the problem of life; and it is safe to say that if in the future it is found possible to sum up the process of life in a formula it will not be a formula of this kind. Life must be summed up in terms of life, not translated into another language. Least of all is such a formula adequate to human life. You can never compress reason and beauty and hope and fellowship and the organic being of communities and nations into differentiations, coherences, and heterogeneities. These terms may be applicable to human life, just as you can measure a man in inches and pounds, but they can never be the essential and characteristic truth about it. There is more light and more good sense in the simple statement of Comte that progress "consists in educating, more and more, the characteristic faculties of humanity, in comparison with those of animality."

Of Spencer's volumes on the *Principles of Sociology* I need say little, not that they are unimportant but because, being a logical development of his *First Principles*, they do not offer anything

¹ *First Principles*, chap. xvii.

fundamentally different. They are, in general, what one might expect; and the value one sets upon them will vary with one's estimate of the point of view and method. The material was collected under Spencer's direction by assistants, usually, I think, with a definite plan as to what he meant to get out of it. It was rather an amassing of illustrations than research, though fresh ideas often occurred to him in the process. If we are content with a vast array of facts, sequently arranged and clearly interpreted in accordance with large but somewhat mechanical conceptions, we shall regard these as important works; if we think that human insight is a *sine qua non* they will seem little more than a desert, the more forbidding the more there is of it.

Parts I and II are of a general character, called respectively "Data" and "Inductions" of sociology. The remaining parts deal with special institutions—domestic, ceremonial, political, ecclesiastical, professional, and industrial. After three brief introductory chapters discussing the nature of social or super-organic evolution, the classification of the factors, and the influence of climate, geographical features, flora, and fauna, Spencer devotes the bulk of Part I to the nature of primitive man, and chiefly to the genesis of his religious ideas. Although his knowledge of this field was necessarily secondhand, the vigor and ingenuity of his mind enabled him here as elsewhere to advance views which specialists regard with respect.

Part II is a discussion of the organic character of society, and therefore epitomizes the nature and limitations of his sociological thought. Instead of being a direct and searching analysis of the process of human life, it is wholly analogical and hence wholly superficial. Not only is the proposition "Society is an organism" sustained by biological comparisons, but the whole part, of some one hundred and fifty pages, is given to such comparisons. Whatever is said about society is said under the evident domination of conceptions derived from another order of phenomena; and that order is rather the mechanical than the biological, since his biology is itself rather mechanical than vital. The terms of his summing up are similar to those of his general formula of evolution, and the whole part adds nothing of much importance to what we get

from his *First Principles*. I would not object to the use of biological analogy as a source of nomenclature and framework; every new growth of knowledge, I suppose, has to use the language of the old. But surely the material itself, the observation and conception, should be essentially direct and fresh, and with Spencer it is not so.

The elaborate discussion of particular institutions that follows is always clear, always vigorous, always ingenious, and always subject to the limitations I have pointed out. In some cases, as in his treatment of the opposition between militarism and industrialism, he sets forth practical truth of great moment, but never, I think, without a certain superficiality inseparable from his method.

Descriptive Sociology is a publication, in eight atlas-like volumes, of material compiled by his assistants, primarily for other works, and giving historical and descriptive data regarding the principal savage and barbarous peoples—African, Asiatic, and American—and also regarding the Hebrews and Phoenicians, the French, and the English. The facts and references are arranged in parallel columns under appropriate captions, so that it is easy to find what one seeks. I have made some use of these works, and it is my impression that they are much less known than they deserve to be. For students making comparative studies covering a wide range of societies they should be of much service. They were published by subscription and represent on Spencer's part a large pecuniary sacrifice to scientific ideals. When their publication ceased, he estimated his net loss at about £4,000.

The two strongest impressions I receive on re-reading parts of Spencer are that of the fixity of his limitations and that of the abundance of his mind within those limitations. Although, if I am right, his way of seeing and thinking was not sociological, it was large, keen-edged, and propelled by an intellectual passion almost sublime. Though commonly described as an infidel, his work was a signal act of faith. Never timid or half-hearted, he stained with his life-blood every detail of his vast scheme and defended it as a mother defends her child. He spent his whole life in the elucidation and propagation of truth as he saw it, devoting without question

his spirit and all its instruments to this supreme object. Some of his chief defects were virtues in excess; as he might have been more of a man of science had he been less ardent as a philosopher and moralist. That he was a moralist, somewhat dogmatic, but sincere and ready to make sacrifices, there can be no doubt. He shone also as a critic of easy-going conventions. Bold, ingenious, iconoclastic, pungent in illustration, he loved to demolish shams and did it extremely well. He raked up and burned much theological and other rubbish, earning the gratitude of all the liberal world.

If I have seemed to depreciate him it is perhaps because Spencer set his claims so high that any attempt to estimate them almost inevitably takes the form of lowering his own mark. But, when all is said, he remains a man of extraordinary powers and vast influence upon the thought of his day, if not altogether the equal mate of Darwin that we once supposed him to be.